

Message Text

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R 241548 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8185

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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SUBJ: SAPIR CONTINUES ARGUMENT ABOUT TERRITORIES

REF: TEL AVIV 2969

SUMMARY. FINANCE MINISTER SAPIR CITED STATISTICS (IN APRIL 23 RADIO INTERVIEW) INDICATING THAT IF ISRAEL ANNEXES OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ITS POPULATION WILL BE 45 PERCENT ARAB IN 25 YEARS. REBUTTING DAYAN' S ARGUMENTS IN LABOR PARTY DEBATE (REFTEL) SAPIR SAID ISRAEL HOLDS TERRITORIES FOR SECURITY, NOT RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS AND THAT RELIGION SHOULD NOT DICTATE TERRITORY ISRAEL SEEKS TO RETAIN UNDER FINAL SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. DEBATE ON POLICY TOWARD OCCUPIED TERRITORIES CONTINUED INFORMALLY APRIL 23 WHEN FINANCE MINISTER SAPIR IN RADIO INTERVIEW WARNED THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE COURTING " STRANGULATION" IF IT ANNEXED TERRITORIES AND TOOK OVER ARAB POPULATIONS. CITING STATISTICAL DATA HE SAID WAS RECENTLY SUPPLIED HIM, SAPIR PREDICTED THAT IN 25 YEARS ARAB MINORITY IN ISRAEL WOULD REACH 45 PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION IF TERRITORIES ARE RETAINED. EVEN ASSUMING THAT 50,000 IMMIGRANTS ARRIVE EACH YEAR FOR NEXT 25 YEARS, HE SAID POPULATION IN 1998 WOULD BE FIVE MILLION JEWS AND FOUR AND A

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HALF MILLION ARABS. HE NOTED THAT ACTUAL NET IMMIGRATION SINCE 1948 HAS BEEN FAR BELOW 50,000 PER YEAR. PRESENCE OF FOUR AND A HALF MILLION ARABS WOULD BE " DYNAMITE WHICH WOULD BLOW UP THE STATE," HE WARNED. THESE ARABS WOULD KEEP THEIR RELIGION, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AND WOULD BE GIVEN FULL CIVIC RIGHTS. THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE GIVEN SAME STANDARD OF LIVING, SAME HIGHLY DEVELOPED ECONOMY AND SAME EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS JEWS. ISRAEL COULD NOT AFFORD TO INVEST MANY THOUSANDS OF MILLIONS OF POUNDS NECESSARY FOR THIS TASK. SAPIR CLAIMED IT IS UP TO WORLD TO AID RESETTLING ARAB REFUGEES-- NOT ISRAEL.

2. SAPIR SAID ISRAEL MUST MAKE CLEAR THAT ITS PRESENCE IN AREAS IS TEMPORARY. THIS IS ONLY WAY TO MAINTAIN RELATIVE TRANQUILITY THERE. ON OTHER HAND, THERE CAN BE NO GOING BACK TO 1967 BORDERS, HE SAID. ISRAELIS MUST GO ON LIVING WITHOUT RESTORATION OF BOUNDARIES OF ANCIENT ISRAEL, BUT PRE-1967 LINES MUST BE RECTIFIED. AT SAME TIME, HE SAID HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IN A PALESTINIAN ENTITY.

3. SAPIR SAID HE WOULD NOT AGREE TO ANY WITHDRAWAL BEFORE PEACE AND SPECIFICALLY OBJECTED TO HISTADRUT SECRETARY- GENERAL BEN-AHARON' S REPORTED WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW UNILATERALLY (TEL AVIV 0944) IF DEADLOCK WITH ARAB STATES CONTINUES INDEFINITELY. BUT HE SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER ANY CONCESSIONS THAT DID NOT HARM COUNTRY' S SECURITY, FOR WHEN TALKING OF PEACE, ONLY YARDSTICK MUST BE ISRAEL' S SECURITY. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT MENTION DAYAN BY NAME, SAPIR THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW WAS PRIMARILY REBUTTING DEFENSE MINISTER' S ARGUMENT THAT SECURITY IS NOT THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE CRITERION FOR SEEKING TO RETAIN PARTS OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES UNDER FINAL SETTLEMENT.

4. FINANCE MINISTER REJECTED WHAT HE CALLED INTRODUCTION OF MYSTICISM AND IRRATIONAL CONCEPTS INTO DEBATE ON FUTURE OF WEST BANK. ISRAEL IS IN CONTROL OF TERRITORIES BECAUSE OF ARAB AGGRESSION IN SIX- DAY WAR, AND NOT BECAUSE ISRAELIS ARE A PEOPLE LIBERATING THEIR HOMELAND, SAPIR CLAIMED. STRESSING THAT HE HAD NEVER CAMPAIGNED AGAINST RELIGION, HE NONETHELESS OBJECTED TO RELIGION DICTATING WHAT TERRITORIES ISRAEL OUGHT TO KEEP. HE INDICATED THAT TERRITORIES DEBATES IS NOT ABOUT RELIGION, BUT ABOUT FUTURE OF ISRAELI STATE WHICH ISRAELIS WILL HAVE TO DEFEND. BUTTON

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